

Troth's Fortune (Orchard Knob)  
Near Easton  
Talbot County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-98

HABS

MD

21- EASTON

5-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Maryland

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared in Washington Office

Addendum To

Troth's Fortune (Orchard Knob) (William Troth House)  
Dover Road  
Easton Vicinity  
Talbot County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-98

HABS  
MD,  
21-EATON,  
5-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
MD,  
21-EATO.V,  
5-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
ADDENDUM TO

TROTH'S FORTUNE  
(ORCHARD KNOB)  
(WILLIAM TROTH HOUSE)

HABS No. MD-98

Location: Dover Road, Easton Vic., Talbot County, Maryland.

Present Owner and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Charles Platt, Jr.

Present Use: Residence

Date of Easement: December 17, 1975

Statement of Significance: Troth's Fortune is a well-preserved example of late seventeenth century vernacular architecture in Maryland. The principal facade faces the Choptank River, the early major means of access. The three bay Flemish bond structure dates from about 1686 to 1710 and has been enhanced by later compatible additions. The house is located on a site which encompasses farmland, wooded areas, and marshes near the banks of the Choptank.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: Troth's Fortune was constructed between 1686 and 1710.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: In 1679 William Troth patented two parcels of land, 400 acres called Troth's Fortune and 100

acres known as Troth's Addition. Seven years later he purchased 300 acres of a tract called Acton Farm from John Acton, son of the original patentee. The house now erroneously called Troth's Fortune was constructed for William Troth at Acton, and probably was built between 1686 and 1710. The confusion may stem from H. C. Forman's account in his book, Early Manor and Plantation Houses of Maryland (1934). He referred to the house as Troth's Fortune, although it was called Acton Farm in property deeds as late as 1932 and 1936.

Troth's grandson, William Troth III inherited Acton Farm, including the dwelling, from his father, Henry Troth, when he was only three years old. William Troth IV inherited the property from his father, William Troth III, in 1814. When he died in 1852, the property passed to his sister, Ann Birchhead (Troth) Brown, who sold it two years later to Daniel Cowgill of Delaware. The house was used as a farm building for about one hundred years. The present owners are Mr. and Mrs. Charles Platt, Jr. Mrs. Platt and her late husband, Mr. Frederic C. Thomas, purchased Troth's Fortune in 1946 and constructed two additions on the northeast gable end.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The oldest portion of Troth's Fortune or Acton dates from about 1686 to 1710. It is a three bay brick structure with a cedar shingle gambrel roof.
5. Additions and Alterations: Troth's Fortune has three additions, all located at the northeast gable end. Two clapboard additions were made by Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Thomas after their purchase of the house in 1946. The late Mr. Thomas was an architect and executed the design for the additions. The gambrel roof brick wing was made at an earlier unknown date and now adjoins the clapboard additions.

The main house was altered at an unknown date when new windows were installed on the northwest facade, probably about fifty years ago. The brickwork around the windows is obviously new.

A fire in the 1930's reportedly destroyed an addition at the southwest wall. The entry to the main block is still visible on the southern half of the exterior wall.

6. Historical Events and Personages: By the time William Troth arrived in 1679, Talbot County was a strong Quaker center of the Eastern Shore. Quakers arrived in Talbot County in the 1650's from Annapolis and Kent Island. Widespread violent persecution of members of the Society of Friends was limited to the 1660's. In the following decade the sect flourished in Talbot County. Early Quakers did not regard slavery as inconsistent with their views. William Troth owned thirteen slaves at his death in 1710;

Henry Troth owned twenty-four in 1729. It was not until 1777 that the possession of slaves was cause for expulsion from the Meeting.

In 1694, Troth was appointed a press master for Bolingbroke Hundred in Talbot County. This position was formed by an Act of Assembly which required "honest and substantial men" to see that goods were not illegally taken from the people of the county to support the local and colony troop.

At that time of Troth's death in 1710, he owned 1,216 acres in Talbot County, 500 acres in Dorchester County, and undetermined amounts (greater than 240 acres) in Queen Anne's County. The total exceeded 2,000 acres. This large land holding indicates the wealth accumulated by Troth. The estate inventories also enumerated Troth's economic success. The total value of goods in the 1711 inventory was £ 929.18.3 1/2. The larger portion of this inventory consisted of items "in the store". An additional inventory recorded in 1712 amounted to £ 276.6.2 3/4, of which £ 216 was "Cash in bank in ye hands of Jonath. Searth & Thos. Bond--merchts in London as per Acct current." Troth's net worth in goods was approximately £ 1,206. Fewer than 1 % of Maryland's planters had a net worth greater than £ 1,000 in 1710.

Troth achieved this wealth through mercantile activities rather than agricultural means. Although most large tobacco planters traded directly with England, the small ones sold their crops to other planters in the colonies. They received less money this way, but the risk of damage during transport across the Atlantic and debt to England merchants was eliminated. Troth was one of the few colonials who purchased tobacco in America, and then shipped it to England. Later, this system dominated the eighteenth century.

Stores such as Troth's were located all over Virginia and Maryland. A variety of wares were available as these stores were virtually the sole source of manufactured goods available to the colonists. Troth stocked everything from tin pans and needles to powder and shot. The inventory included a variety of fabrics: calico, damask, crepe, serge, linsey, and lining (linen). Shoes were also available, fifty-two for men and twenty-two for women. Leather, window glass, iron, paper, nails, carpenter's tools, hoes, guns, and chafing dishes were sold as well.

When William Troth died in 1710, Troth's Fortune, Acton, and store were bequested to his son, Henry. When Henry died only nineteen years later in 1729, there was no reference to the once important store.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Secondary sources:

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination form, April 23, 1975.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Troth's Fortune is a three bay structure which dates from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Flemish bond brickwork with glazed headers is exceptionally fine as is the unusual winding stair. Later additions to the house are compatible with the original design.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Walls: The three bay structure erected from 1686 to 1710 is brick laid in Flemish bond with glazed black headers on the principal or southeast facade. (The house was accessible by water and thus faces the Choptank River). Common bond, with three rows of stretchers to one row of headers, is used on the northwest facade, northeast gable, and tower. A chamfered water table with English bond brick is located on the southeast facade. Simple stepped brick is used for the water table on the southwest and northwest facades. The southwest facade shows considerable mortar erosion to about 3/4" deep in some places. Both additions are covered with white clapboard.
2. Porches, Stoops, Bulkheads: All walkways and steps leading to the house are brick. A porch with low sloping roof is located at the northwest facade of the addition which serves as a bedroom. The porch is supported by four painted white posts and has a brick floor at ground level. The brick floor extends toward the north to form an uncovered terrace in front of the kitchen addition.
3. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys with three-brick corbel course and stucco belt are located on the southwest and northwest walls. The chimney at the northeast is an outside end type, now partially obscured by the addition, while the chimney at the southwest is an inside end type. A third smaller chimney is located at the northwest wall of the gambrel roof brick addition.
4. Openings:
  - a. Doors and Doorways: The main six panel wood door of the principal facade is located in the central bay and has paneled door jambs and trim on the exterior. Another

six panel door is located at the central bay of the northwest and southeast facades.

- b. Windows and shutters: The southeast facade of the main block has two double hung sash windows with twelve-over-twelve lights on the first floor. They date from the twentieth century. The brick work around the windows does not precisely match the earlier Flemish bond. The window with white painted wood muntins, heads, and sills of the northwest facade is double hung sash with twelve-over-twelve lights as well and may date from the initial construction. The windows in the additions are also double hung sash types. The northeast gable has a small double hung window at the attic.
5. Roof: Each roof is covered with wood shingles. The original block has a gambrel roof while the additions have gable roofs. The bedroom addition roof has a low pitch to form the porch roof. Another gambrel roof covers the studio wing.
6. Dormers and Towers:
  - a. Dormers: The main block has three dormers with double hung sash windows with six-over-six lights on the southeast facade. The northwest facade has one dormer also with a double hung sash window with six-over-six lights. The kitchen addition has two dormers with double hung sash windows with six-over-six lights, one each on the southeast and northwest facades. All trim is painted white.
  - b. Tower: The stair tower is visible on the exterior northwest wall and is covered by a shed roof perpendicular to the main block at the roof. The winding stair is lighted by a six-over-six double hung sash window.

#### C. PROJECT INFORMATION

This information was compiled by Susan Stein in 1977 for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and edited by Eleni Silverman, Architectural Historian, HABS, in June of 1984.